

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8135

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORNE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MASERU 0245

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, LT

SUBJECT: DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN LESOTHO

REF: MASERU 0076,

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER C.D. MOLAPO ARRANGED FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME WITHIN HOURS AFTER MY RETURN TO LESOTHO JANUARY 25 FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON. HIS PRINCIPAL PURPOSE WAS TO CONVEY, ON INSTRUCTIONS, THE GOL'S REQUEST THAT U.S. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN LESOTHO BE RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF RESIDENT AMBASSADOR. MOLAPO SAID THE CABINET HAD ASKED HIM TO CARRY OUT THE SAME REQUEST TO FRANCE AND CANADA WHICH HE HAD ALREADY DONE. THE MAIN REASON FOR THE GOL DECISION CONCERNED "SECURITY" WHICH HE EXPLAINED AS A FORM OF "PROTECTION" THAT WOULD MAKE SOUTH AFRICA "THINK TWICE" BEFORE ALLOWING "INCURSIONS" WHICH ARE TAKING PLACE WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY FROM TRANSKEI (REFTEL). PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN IN A TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION
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JANUARY 26 INDEPENDENTLY REITERATED THE GOL REQUEST FOR RESIDENT AMBASSADOR, CONFIRMED APPROACHES HAD SIMILARLY BEEN MADE TO FRANCE AND CANADA, AND AGAIN RELATED THE DECISION TO "SECURITY" CONSIDERATIONS WHICH HE STATED IN SIMILAR (BUT MORE COGENT) TERMS, ADDING AN OPTION THAT "IF THE U.S. COULD NOT UPGRADE ITS DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION" HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD COME UP WITH SOME "ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF MEETING LESOTHO'S SECURITY CONCERNS."

END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER. AFTER I REVIEWED, AT HIS REQUEST, SOME IMPRESSIONS OF THE WASHINGTON SCENE, FOREIGN MINISTER MOLAPO SAID HE WAS ACTING ON CABINET-APPROVED INSTRUCTIONS TO REQUEST THAT THE LEVEL OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN LESOTHO BE RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF "FULL-FLEDGED" MISSION. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS, HE SAID WHAT HE MEANT WAS RESIDENT AMBASSADOR. MOLAPO SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE CLEAR AT THE OUTSET THE CABINET'S POSITION THAT THIS REQUEST WAS NOT TO BE CONSTRUED IN ANY WAY AS INDICATING DISSATISFACTION WITH DCM STOKES' OR MY WORK. ON THE CONTRARY, THE GOL WOULD BE PLEASED IF I COULD BE FULL-TIME HERE; THE GOL WOULD ALSO BE PLEASED TO HAVE MR. STOKES NAMED AMBASSADOR. THE POINT WAS THAT THE GOL FELT RESIDENT AMBASSADORS WERE NECESSARY AS A FORM FO "SECURITY".

3. MOLAPO NOTED THAT HE HAD ALREADY CONVOKED THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN MAPUTO TO MAKE THE SAME REQUEST; SIMILARLY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN APPROACHED THROUGH ITS HIGH COMMISSION IN PRETORIA AS WELL AS DIRECTLY IN OTTAWA. LESOTHO'S OBJECTIVE WAS RESIDENT REPRESENTATION OF THESE FIVE WESTERN POWERS (THE UK AND FRANCE HAVE RESIDENT HIGH COMMISSIONER/AMBASSADOR HERE). MOLAPO SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT I HAD COME TO LESOTHO DIRECTLY FROM WASHINGTON; IF I HAD NOT DONE SO, HE WOULD HAVE ASKED ME TO COME HERE IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

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4. RETURNING TO WHAT HE TERMED THE RATIONALE FOR THE GOL'S REQUEST, MOLAPO BEGAN BY NOTING THAT IN THE PAST ITS PERIODIC REQUESTS FOR RESIDENT AMBASSADORS HAD BEEN BASED ON DESIRE FOR "DIGNITY AND GLORY" (SIC). NOW IT WAS FOR "SECURITY" REASONS, NAMELY THE ADDED PROTECTION AGAINST "INCURSIONS" FROM THE TRANSKEI THAT WERE TAKING PLACE WITH ALARMING FREQUENCY (REFTEL). ASKED TO ELABORATE, MOLAPO SAID, FIRST OF ALL, "PEOPLE FROM TRANSKEI, WHO CAN DO NOTHING WITHOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S APPROVAL" WERE RAIDING AND ROBBING BASOTHO FARMERS OF THEIR CATTLE. UP TO NOW THE GOL HAS EXERCISED "RESTRAINT". THIS "CATTLE RUSTLING" (HIS WORDS) HAD NOW REACHED THE POINT, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOL HAS DECIDED TO STATION A POLICE DETACHMENT ON A HIGH OBSERVATION POINT IN THE AREA. IN ADDITION, THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA WERE ARMING THEMSELVES AND TOLD BY GOL OFFICIALS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT ONLY TRACK THE "RUSTLERS" BACK TO TRANSKEI BUT WERE AUTHORIZED TO SHOOT THE THIEVES -- WITH THE ASSURANCE THAT GOL POLICE WOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD TO PROTECT THEM. MOLAPO LINKED THIS ACTIVITY TO THE NEED FOR RESIDENT AMBASSADORIAL REPRESENTATION IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, E.G. (A) THE MISSIONS WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO "VERIFY THAT WHAT WE SAY IS TRUE AND TO BE HEARD IN THEIR CAPITALS," (B) THIS WILL HELP TO COUNTERACT THE "POWERFUL SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA WHICH REJECT OUR FACTS AS FALSE", (C) CAUSE SOUTH AFRICA TO "THINK

TWICE" BEFORE PERMITTING THESE INCURSIONS AND (D) IT WILL CONVEY THE "IMPRESSION OF MOVEMENT" REFLECTING WESTERN INTEREST AND CONCERN RE LESOTHO.

5. AFTER ASSURING MOLAPO I WOULD FAITHFULLY REPORT HIS REQUEST, I STRESSED THE FACT THAT THE GOL'S REPORTS OF BORDER PROBLEMS ARE ACCURATELY REPORTED NOW. I THEN ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS: (A) WAS HE SUGGESTING THAT THE CATTLE RAIDS WERE CARRIED OUT WITH SAG APPROVAL? MOLAPO'S REPLY: "THEY HAVE NOT CONDEMNED THE RAIDS; WHAT OTHER CONCLUSION CAN ONE DRAW?" (B) HAS THE GOL EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN TO THE SAG ON A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LEVEL? MOLAPO'S REPLY: "THE SAG WILL DENY IT HAS ANY RESPONSIBILITY," ALTHOUGH HE STILL PLANS TO DO SO. (C) HAS THE GOL TAKEN STEPS TO WARN TRANSKEI OFFICIALS OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE GOL VIEWS
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THIS QUESTION? REPLY: "NO, BECAUSE TRANSKEI AUTHORITIES ARE PUPPETS WHO DO NOTHING WITHOUT SAG APPROVAL". IN BRIEF, ATTEMPTS TO ISOLATE AND FOCUS ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROBLEM (SEPARATE FROM THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN RESOLVING IT) WERE TO NO AVAIL. IN CONCLUSION, MOLAPO SAID THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THE GOL HAD "FORMALLY PUT ITS CASE". I REASSURED HIM IT WOULD BE FAITHFULLY REPORTED.

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

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INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

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AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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LIMDIS

6. PRIME MINISTER. ABOUT MID-WAY IN OUR TWO-HOUR TALK ON JANUARY 26, PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN INTRODUCED THE SAME SUBJECT BY NOTING FONMIN MOLAPO'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR RAISING THE QUESTION OF ELEVATING U.S., AND ESTABLISHING RESIDENT FRENCH AND CANADIAN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN MASERU. JONATHAN SPOKE OF THE "SECURITY REASONS" MOTIVATING THE GOL REQUEST AND MENTIONED FIRST OF ALL THE PROBLEM OF "CATTLE RUSTLERS". HIS RATIONALE WAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE FONMIN; E.G. HE ALLEGED THE "INCURSIONS WERE AT THE INSTIGATION" OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THAT THE PRESENCE OF RESIDENT WESTERN AMBASSADORS WOULD HELP ASSURE "KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND FULL REPORTING OF" THESE INCURSIONS. HE REITERATED FORCEFULLY THE POINT THAT THE GOL REQUEST WAS INTENDED AS "NO REFLECTION" ON MR. STOKES OR ME; ON THE CONTRARY, THE CABINET WAS AWARE AND APPRECIATIVE OF OUR ACTIVE SYMPATHY, ETC. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN ADDED THE COMMENT THAT "IF THE U.S. SHOULD FIND IT HAS A PROBLEM WITH RAISING ITS DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION," THEN HE HOPED WE WOULD SUGGEST "OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO HELP MEET LESOTHO'S SECURITY CONCERNS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FACE OF SAG MACHINATIONS". I ASSURED THE PM OF OUR APPRECIATION FOR HIS WORDS OF CONFIDENCE AND THAT I WOULD FAITHFULLY REPORT HIS REQUEST AND THE SECURITY DIMENSION HE OUTLINED.

7. COMMENT: THE GOL DESIRE FOR RESIDENT AMBASSADORS IS CLEARLY UNDERSTANDABLE ALTHOUGH THEIR ATTEMPTS TO ARTICULATE IT IN "SECURITY" TERMS DO NOT STRIKE US AS SENSIBLE. INDEED THE GOL'S RECORD FOR ACCURACY IN REPORTING ITS BORDER PROBLEMS (AMONG OTHER THINGS) IS NOT ONE THAT IS CALCULATED TO WIN MUCH SUPPORT. THE BUREAUCRACY IN GENERAL IS WEAK WHICH MAY HELP EXPLAIN THE TENDENCY TOWARD INACCURACY AS WELL AS CORRUPTIBILITY. PARADOXICALLY, THESE MAY CONSTITUTE SOME OF THE STRONGEST CONSIDERATIONS FAVORING PRESENCE OF AMBASSADORS, I.E. THEIR GREATER INFLUENCE WITH GOL OFFICIALS WHEN POINTING TO THE UNWISDOM OF ADVANCING SUCH ALLEGATIONS AND RATIONALES AS MADE BY FONMIN MOLAPO (PARA. 4 ABOVE). AMBASSADORS MIGHT ALSO HELP TEMPER SOME OF THE EMOTIONAL (AND OCCASIONALLY EGREGIOUS) GOL DECLARATIONS, E.G. THAT THE SHOOTING OF A BASOTHO WOMAN BY A SOUTH AFRICAN FARMER WAS A "DECLARATION OF WAR".

RECOMMENDATION: ON A PERSONAL BASIS I MIGHT ADD THAT RECEIPT OF THIS FORMAL REQUEST, COUPLED WITH THE UNDERSTANDABLE GOL NERVOUSNESS AS TENSIONS MOUNT, FEARS GROW OF EMBARGOES THAT COULD ENDANGER THE ECONOMY, ETC., LEADS ME TO

RECOMMEND THAT THE U.S. PLAN TO UPGRADE OUR REPRESENTATION TO
INCLUDE (A) A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR AND (B) AN EXPERIENCED FSO-5
POL/ECON OFFICER, (C) A SECOND AMERICAN SECRETARY, AND (D)
UPGRADE EXISTING GSO POSITION TO FSO-5 ADMIN OFFICER.
NORLAND

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